

and for all noncitizen children adopted into U.S. households in the future. I welcome this action to support families who adopt foreign-born children by removing an unnecessary impediment to citizenship for these and other foreign-born children.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
October 30, 2000.

NOTE: H.R. 2883, approved October 30, was assigned Public Law No. 106-395.

**Statement on Signing the Visa
Waiver Permanent Program Act**

October 30, 2000

Today I have signed into law H.R. 3767, the Visa Waiver Permanent Program Act. This Act will, among other things, make permanent a highly successful pilot program that for the past twelve years has permitted nationals of many countries to enter the United States for business and tourism without the necessity of first obtaining a U.S. visa, so long as U.S. citizens are granted similar privileges in their countries. By facilitating travel to the United States in this manner, the Visa Waiver Program is helping to generate billions of dollars in tourist and business revenues for U.S. companies. At the same time, it is fostering good will for the United States and an understanding of who we are as a people by giving to millions of citizens from participating countries an increased opportunity to visit our many natural wonders as well as the places that are vital to our national heritage.

The Visa Waiver Program is good for government, too. Because visitors from participating countries do not have to obtain visas, the Department of State is able to reallocate scarce resources from issuing routine visas in low-risk waiver countries to doing more for American citizens and combating fraud in high-risk countries. Further, the legislation contains a provision that removes a potential roadblock to continued participation in the program of many countries by recognizing, for purposes of reciprocity, common border areas composed of several states.

H.R. 3767 establishes new requirements that will strengthen the existing Visa Waiver

Program. For example, it contains provisions to enhance our security by requiring that within specified time frames all foreign nationals entering the United States under the program have machine-readable passports. Those passports are less susceptible to fraud and can more readily assist the Immigration and Naturalization Service to track the entry and timely departure of foreign nationals. Further, H.R. 3767 requires the Attorney General, in consultation with the Secretary of State, prior to admitting a new country into the Visa Waiver Program, to consider the effect of the country's admission on the law enforcement and security interests of the United States. It also will require continual monitoring of those considerations with respect to all countries in the program. Finally, H.R. 3767 provides an emergency procedure for termination of a country's participation. This occurs when the Attorney General, in consultation with the Secretary of State, determines that because of events in that country, such as a severe breakdown of law and order or economic collapse, the continued participation of that country would pose a threat to our law enforcement or security interests.

In addition to these provisions of the Visa Waiver Program, this Act also includes immigration-related provisions that will further the Administration's objective of promoting the rapid and pro-competitive privatization of the International Telecommunications Satellite Organization (INTELSAT), a goal widely shared by INTELSAT member countries. By ensuring that the immigrant status of the current employees of this intergovernmental entity will not be adversely affected, the United States is affirming its commitment to a smooth privatization and expressing its desire to welcome a pro-competitively privatized INTELSAT as a valued U.S. corporate citizen.

In its pilot state, the Visa Waiver Program has been a great success. Now, as a result of this legislation, it not only will be a better program, but it will become a permanent part of our Nation's immigration system.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
October 30, 2000.

NOTE: H.R. 3767, approved October 30, was assigned Public Law No. 106-396.

Statement on Signing the Floyd D. Spence National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2001

October 30, 2000

Today I have signed into law H.R. 4205, the "Floyd D. Spence National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2001," which authorizes FY 2001 appropriations for military activities of the Department of Defense (DOD), military construction, and defense activities of the Department of Energy (DOE). While I have concerns with several provisions in this Act, I have determined that H.R. 4205 generally reflects my strong commitment to the Nation's security. It provides for critical national defense needs and priorities, maintains the readiness of our Armed Forces, supports my continued commitment to improving the quality of life for our military personnel and their families, and allows for the modernization of our weapons systems.

In particular, this Act authorizes key elements of my plan to improve military compensation, including my request for a 3.7 percent across-the-board increase in basic pay for our Armed Forces. I am also pleased that the Act authorizes my request for increases in housing allowances, which will reduce servicemembers' out-of-pocket expenses. In providing service members with a supplemental subsistence allowance, H.R. 4205 begins to address the concern the Congress and I share with regard to servicemembers. In addition, the bill provides military retirees access to prescription drugs with low out-of-pocket costs, a significant benefit. I strongly support enactment of the Administration's prescription drug benefit for all Medicare retirees through the Medicare program. As prescription drugs play an increasingly important role in health care, it is imperative that our seniors have prescription drug coverage. Finally, the Act provides comprehensive health care coverage to military retirees over the age of 65. Although I am concerned that the Congress fails to deal fully with the

high, long-term cost of this new benefit, I am pleased overall with the way the Act supports individuals, who dedicated so much to the service of our country.

I am also pleased that the Act supports my request for key programs to continue modernizing our military forces and reaffirms the \$60 billion in overall procurement funding I requested to meet the recommendation of the 1997 Quadrennial Defense Review. I am encouraged that the Act includes funding for the Navy's LPD-17 Amphibious Ship, DD-21 (the next-generation destroyer), the F/A-18 E/F, the Air Force's F-22 tactical fighter aircraft, the Joint Strike Fighter, and support for the Army's transformation effort. These programs are critical to ensuring our Nation's military superiority into the 21st century. I am disappointed, however, that the Congress has again failed to support my proposal to authorize two additional rounds of base closure and realignment. The Department of Defense's base infrastructure is far too large for its military forces and must be reduced if the Department is to obtain adequate appropriations for readiness and modernization requirements during the next decade.

I am pleased that the bill includes a program to compensate individuals who have suffered disabling and potentially fatal illnesses as a result of their work in the Department of Energy's nuclear weapons complex. My Administration has advocated compensating these workers for their heroic sacrifices in a manner that is fair, science-based, and workable, and I commend those in the Congress and in my Administration who have worked tirelessly toward this goal. The passage of this legislation is very encouraging and, while there are constitutional concerns with this provision that I will interpret as advisory, I recognize that much work will need to be done to ensure that this program is successfully implemented so that these workers can be fully and fairly compensated for their sacrifices.

I am also pleased that the conferees included a provision transferring a majority of Naval Oil Shale Reserve No. 2 to the Ute Indian Tribe in Utah, and providing for cleanup of a former uranium mill tailings site near Moab, Utah, on the Colorado River.